

ST. MARY LE BOW



A Short Guide



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Citicare St. Clement's
St. Clement's Church
Clement's Lane
London EC4N 7AE

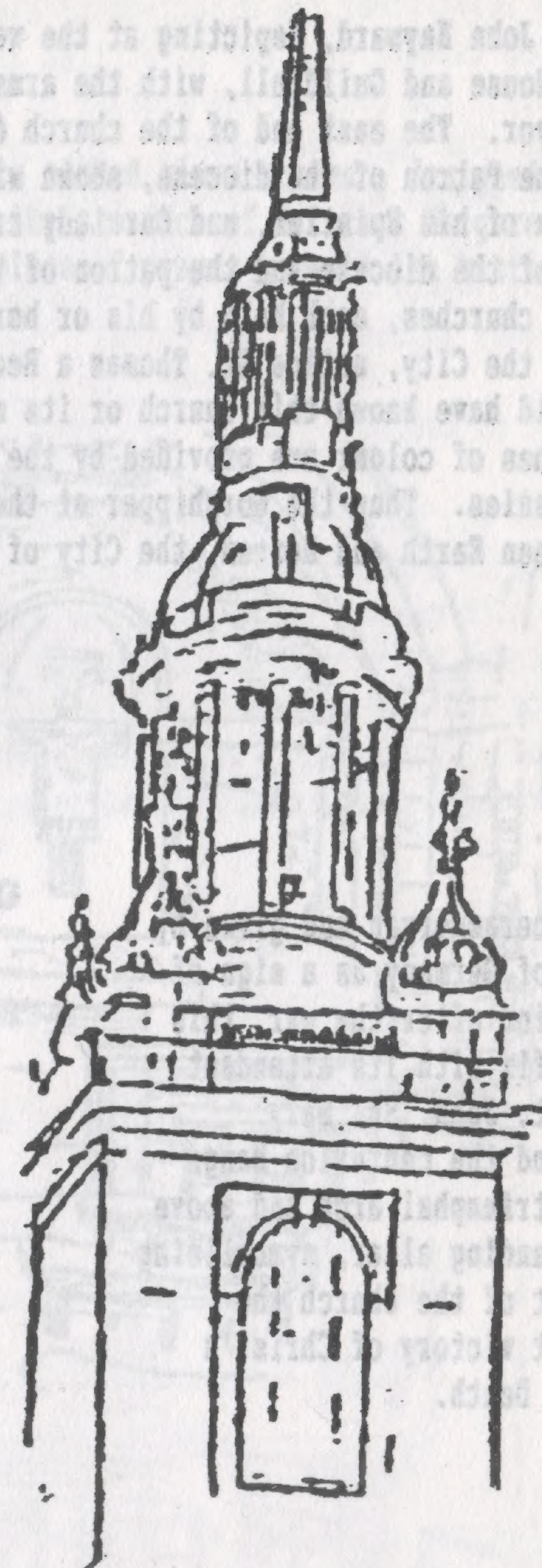
The Origins of our Name

Originally called St. Mary New Church, either because it replaced an older building or was newer than its neighbour in Bow Lane, St. Mary Aldermary, by Norman times this church was called Sancta Maria de Arcubus. Arcubus refers to the arch or bow arches which were in the crypt and commemorated in the bows on top of the medieval tower, as we can see from an ancient seal. When Wren rebuilt the church after the Great Fire, he alluded to these arches in the spire. When you go outside look up towards the tip and you can see them like little buttresses springing up and keeping this play on words, arches and bows alive.

The Church

The model for Wren's church (which replaced the medieval church) is the Basilica of Maxentius in the Roman Forum. The west end has a three-bay facade pediment with a central doorway carrying a segmental pediment on carved brackets. The south front has a projecting pediment with another doorway (false) and a circular window above. Within the church the altar is framed by massive Corinthian columns modelled on a Roman triumphal archway. The central oval window at the apex is wreathed with the garland of victory.

The sense of space and light with black and white marble floor, gilded capitals, spaciousness and harmony, produces something of the feel of a church in Southern Germany. Wrought iron Parclose Screens at the eastern end of the side aisles enclose, to the right, a Chapel for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a steeple-crowned Sacrament House and, to the left, a chapel in memory of those who served in the Norwegian Resistance.

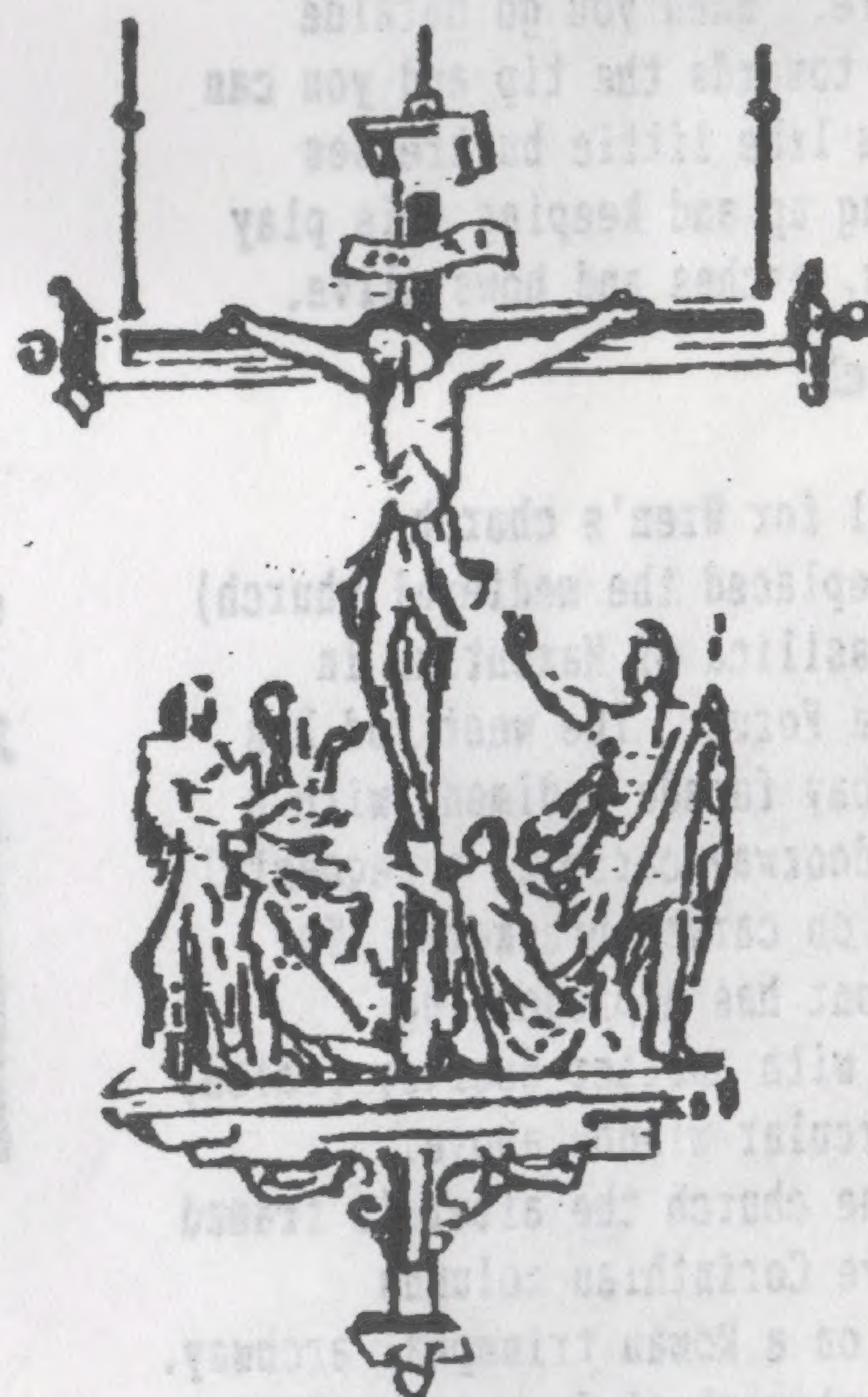


Stained Glass

Designed by John Hayward, depicting at the west end of the church the City in Mansion House and Guildhall, with the arms of the City Corporation and the Lord Mayor. The east end of the church depicts the worship of Heaven, St. Paul, the Patron of the diocese, shown with the sword of his martyrdom and the book of his Epistles, and Our Lady cradling the church in her arms. The patron of the diocese and the patron of the church are surrounded by bombed City churches, each held by his or her patron. At the west end, in the seal of the City, notice St. Thomas a Becket who was born in Cheapside and who would have known this church or its medieval predecessor well. Vivid splashes of colour are provided by the arms of the twelve great Livery Companies. Thus the worshipper at the daily service in this church stands between Earth and Heaven, the City of London and City of God.

The Rood

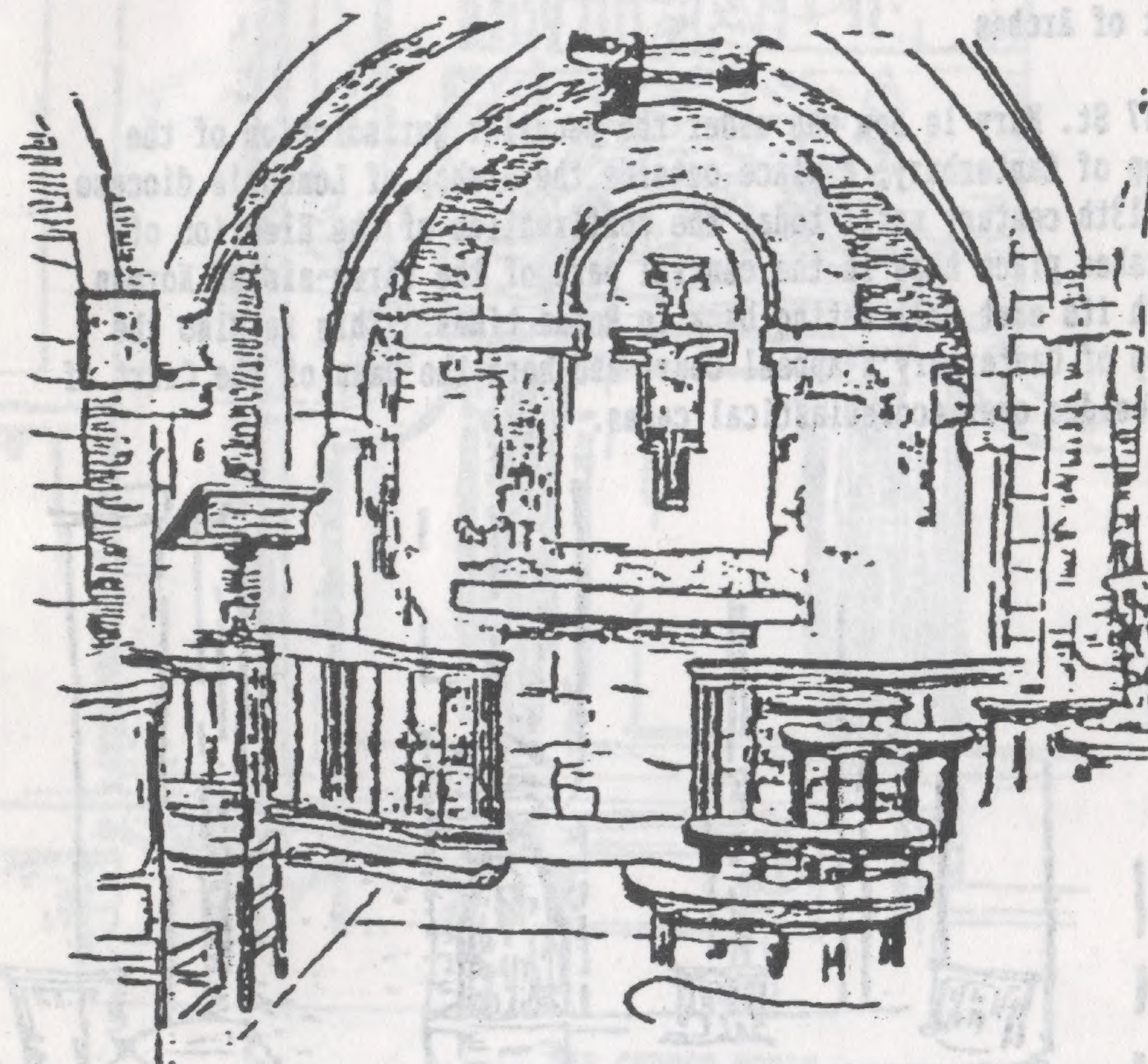
Carved in Oberammergau and given by the people of Germany as a sign of reconciliation after the war, this great Crucifix with its attendant Our Lady, St. John, St. Mary Magdalene and the centurion hangs before the triumphal arch and above the free-standing altar, symbolising at the heart of the church the transcendent victory of Christ's Passion and Death.



THE CRYPT

The Chapel

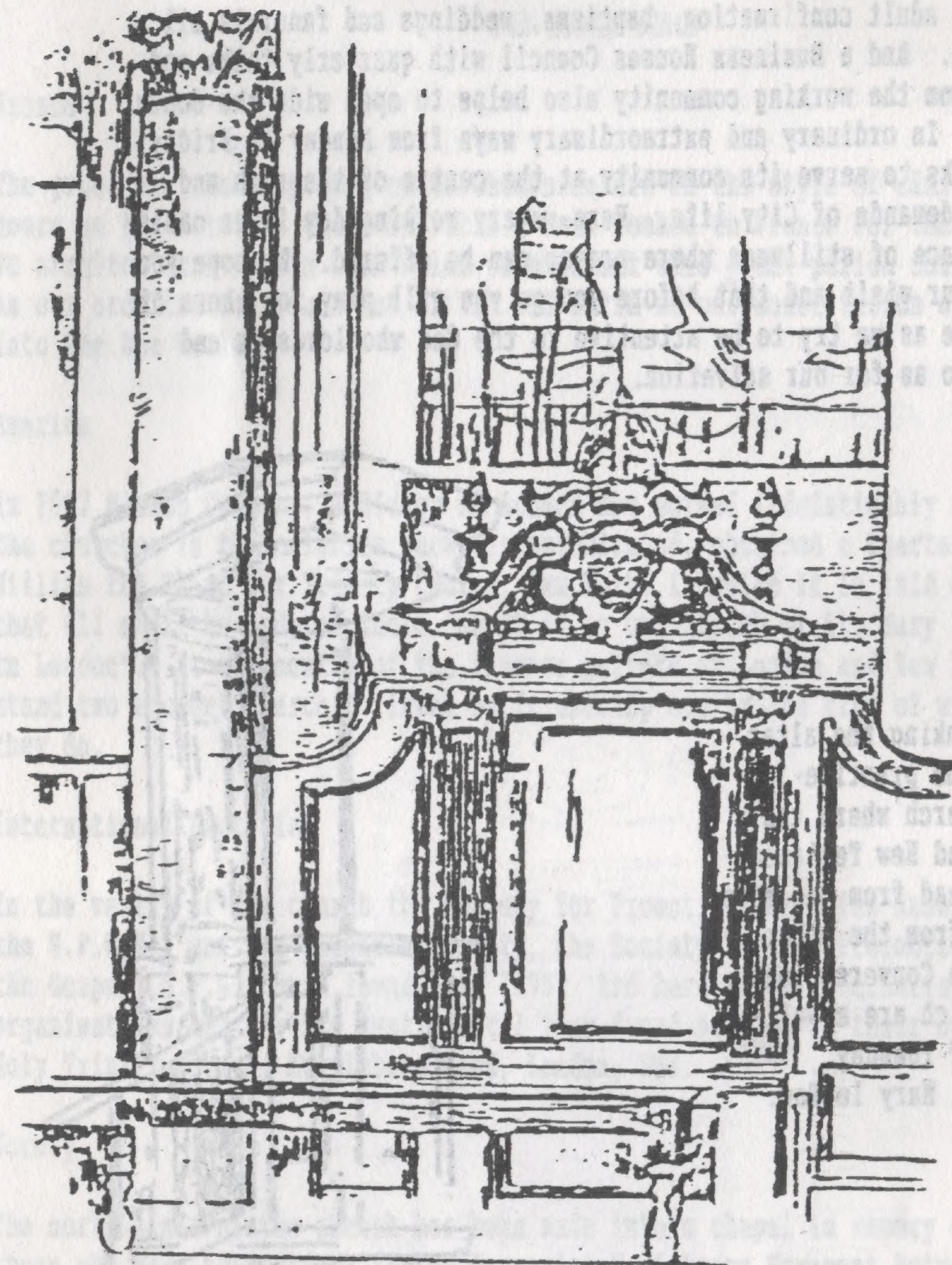
The Chapel of the Holy Spirit with its etched glass screen - designed by John Hayward - was opened in 1960 in the presence of Princess Margaret and has been used daily ever since as a place of prayer beneath the bustle of the City.



Our crypt, the oldest parochial building still in use in London, was possibly built under the direction of Archbishop Lanfrance, the Norman Archbishop brought from Bec by William the Conqueror to be Archbishop of Canterbury. Its columns are similar to those in the crypt at Canterbury Cathedral (Our Lady Undercroft). Notice the finely mortared walls worked by Norman masons and the rougher work of the conquered Saxon labour force. Notice, in the chapel of the Holy Spirit, the blocked-up windows that originally looked out on to the churchyard. The level of London has risen considerably in the last 900 years.

The Court of Arches

Until 1847 St. Mary le Bow was under the peculiar jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, a place outside the Bishop of London's diocese. From the 13th century until today the confirmation of the Election of Bishops takes place here in the central part of the three-aisled Norman Crypt with its east wall dating back to Roman times. This is also the Archbishop of Canterbury's Appeal Court and here the Dean of the Court of Arches presides over ecclesiastical cases.



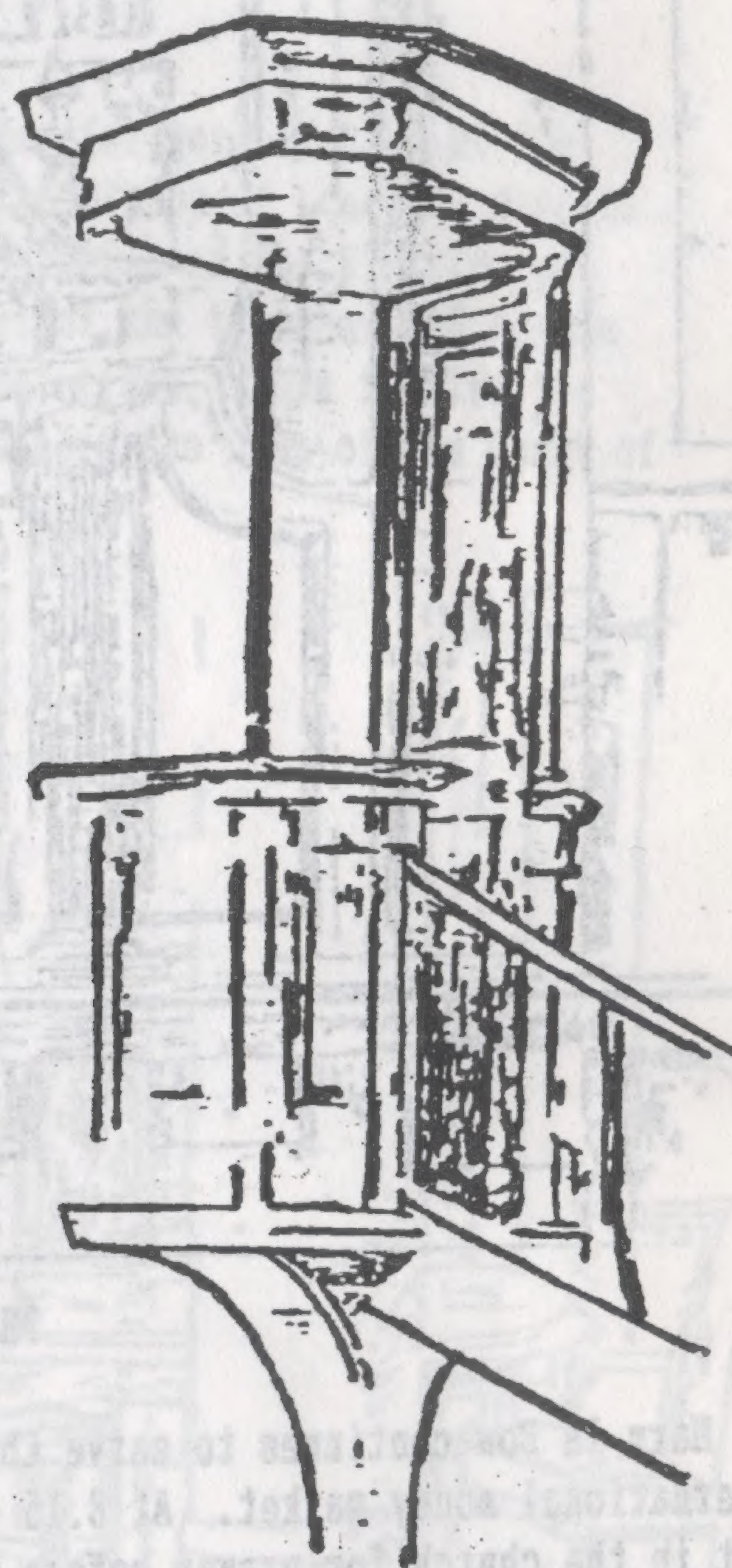
THE CHURCH TODAY

St. Mary le Bow continues to serve Cheapside, now at the centre of the international money market. At 8.15 every morning (Tuesday 7.30am) people meet in the church for prayer before work. From Monday to Friday there is an opportunity to have breakfast together after this. On Thursday at a quarter to six in the evening we have a Parish Communion, music and sermon, and regularly a drink afterwards so that we can build up our community. On some Tuesdays the famous pulpits are used for dialogue. Recent guests have included Patricia Routledge, actress, the Governor Designate of the Bank of England, the Director of the V & A, and the Chairmen of Lloyds, the Midland and the National Westminster Banks.

Preparation for adult confirmation, baptisms, weddings and funerals all take place here. And a Business Houses Council with quarterly talks and many members from the working community also helps to open wide the doors of Bow Church. In ordinary and extraordinary ways from Monday to Friday this church seeks to serve its community at the centre of the rush and complexity and demands of City life. Here, every working day is an oasis of peace and place of stillness where prayer can be offered. We hope you have enjoyed your visit and that before you go you will pray for those of us who work here as we try to be attentive to the God who loves us and gives himself to us for our salvation.

Pulpits

The pulpits flanking the altar - deriving from the practice of the Early Church where the Old Testament and New Testament readings were read from one side and the Gospel from the other - are used for the Conversations or Dialogues which are a well-known feature of Tuesday lunchtime at St. Mary le Bow.



THE WIDER WORLD

France

The great doorcases opening on to Cheapside are in the style of similar doors on the Hotel de Conti in Paris. Wren looked to France for the latest in architectural design with which to ornament this great parish church. As our architecture comes out of the old world so our constitution opens into the New World.

America

In 1697 Bishop Compton, a Bishop of London who worked indefatigably to get the churches in the colonies securely established, obtained a Charter from William the Third for Trinity Church, New York, in which it is laid down that all shall be ordered there "as it is in our Church of St. Mary le Bow in London". At the centre of the finance markets of London and New York stand two ancient churches linked by friendship and by the kind of work they do.

International Societies

In the vestry of the church the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the S.P.C.K., and its daughter society, the Society for the Protection of the Gospel, S.P.G., were founded in 1698. And here these international organisations met in this vestry until they found offices of their own at Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, London, NW1.

Norway

The north aisle of the church has been made into a chapel in memory of those who gave their lives in the Norwegian Resistance Movement between 1940 and 1945. The bronze relief in the Chapel by Ragnhild Butenshon was a gift from the people of Norway and was unveiled by King Olav the Fifth on the Feast of the Annunciation, 25th March 1966. The figure represents St. Michael slaying the dragon, the forces of good mastering the forces of evil.

THE BELLS

Before the last war the B.B.C. had used a recording of Bow Bells as an interval signal and their daily sound had become familiar throughout Britain and the Commonwealth. The bells were silenced by enemy action in 1941 but the B.B.C. continued to broadcast their recorded sound throughout enemy-occupied Europe. When the real bells were recast and rehung and set ringing by the Duke of Edinburgh on the 20th December 1961, there were millions throughout the world to whom this event was of joyful significance. "There is neither speech nor language; but their voices are heard among them. Their sound is gone out into all lands; and their words unto the ends of the world."

